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Contact: Adisa Busuladzic

Phone: +93 (0) 702 636 328

Email: abusuladzic@usaid.gov

USAID Launches the Closing Week of the 2011 Afghan Youth Voices Festival in Kabul

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN – Hundreds of young Afghans from across the country arrived in Kabul today to take part in the closing week of the second annual Afghan Youth Voices Festival. This week is the culmination of five months of multimedia and creative workshops, which have introduced some 1,300 young people to activities as diverse as digital photography, videography, graffiti art, cartoon drawing, and skateboarding.

Organized under the USAID-funded Afghanistan Media Empowerment and Development Program (AMDEP) implemented by Internews, Afghan Youth Voices Media Week will provide a platform for the young people from around the country who have developed multimedia skills, to showcase them at the Afghan Cultural House in Kabul from October 2 through October 6.

Speaking at the opening event, USAID Mission Director Ken Yamashita said, "This festival demonstrates to a young Afghan generation the value of media and the pleasure one can have working with it and in it. The U.S. government is committed to supporting the ability of Afghan youth and other citizens to access independent media and be able to develop their multimedia skills for the benefits of their communities and public life."

Since late May 2011, Afghan Youth Voices Festival has been held at various locations in Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Hirat, and Mazar-e-Sharif. Festival activities have provided a forum for young people to express themselves in innovative projects, offering a lively look at life in Afghanistan today as seen through the eyes of its young men and women.

"Holding these kinds of events has a vital role in empowering Afghan youth. Building their capacity in different fields and providing job opportunities insures the lasting peace in Afghanistan," said Taimoor Shah Eshaqzai, Deputy Minister of Information and Culture in charge of the Youth Affairs.

Workshop participants -- half of them young women -- explored themes such as child labor, access to clean drinking water, and the lack of personal freedom, with a fresh and original perspective. The festival presents work by young filmmakers, photographers and other artists, giving an unusual inside view of contemporary Afghanistan.

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